

September 11, 2000

**Gore Failed Victims of Terrorists**

# **One Year After He Might Have Stopped It, Gore Still Silent on Release of FALN Terrorists**

**Clinton's FALN Surrender**

- One year ago this week, 11 terrorists dedicated to the violent pursuit of Puerto Rican independence walked out of prison thanks to a clemency grant by President Clinton (two more terrorists will be released in coming years).
- They were members of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), which has claimed responsibility for some 130 bombings in the United States, killing six Americans and wounding 84 others.
- President Clinton offered clemency to a total of 16 FALN members convicted of dozens of felonies against the United States, including seditious conspiracy and weapons violations. None of them contested the evidence brought against him at trial, and not a single act of terrorism has been attributed to the FALN since these 16 were imprisoned.
- None of the 16 had requested clemency, apologized to his victims, or expressed any remorse for his actions. The Federal Bureau of Prisons had taped at least one terrorist stating, "I don't have to ask forgiveness from anybody" [Adolfo Matos, *Newsweek*, 9/20/99].
- The FBI, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, two U.S. attorneys, and numerous (if not all) FALN victims and their families opposed clemency.
- Both the House (Roll Call Vote #398; 9/9/99; 311-41) and Senate (SJR 33; Roll Call Vote #273; 9/14/99; 95-2) voted to condemn the clemency grant. (Senator Lieberman voted to condemn the clemency grant.)

## **Clinton Rewards Terrorism**

- At one point during its bombing campaigns, the FALN demanded better treatment for its comrades and members who were in prison at the time. Of the 11 terrorists named, President Clinton released eight.

## **Terrorists Released to Aid VP & First Lady?**

- An internal White House memorandum reveals that releasing the FALN terrorists was seen as a way to aid Vice President Gore's campaign for President. "The VP's Puerto Rican position would be helped," wrote the President's advisor on the matter [House Report 106-488].
- And as former Clinton advisor Dick Morris commented, "Anyone who doesn't believe the timing, and likely the substance, of [President Clinton's] decision was linked to [the First Lady's] courtship of New York's large Puerto Rican vote is too naive for politics" [New York Post, 8/24/99].

## **Gore: "I'm Not Going To Stand In Judgment"**

Throughout his political career, Al Gore has talked tough when it comes to terrorism. But his willingness to tolerate the release of FALN members suggests there may be some things he values more than national security. In a 1986 exchange with then Rep. Dick Cheney (R-WY), then Senator Al Gore (D-TN) was quick to condemn the Reagan Administration for what Gore alleged was a policy of rewarding terrorism:

"MacNeil: How about that, Senator Gore? I think what Congressman Cheney is saying, the U.S. policy of not rewarding terrorism . . . is still intact.

"Sen. Gore: It's not intact at all. And that defense, if he will forgive me for saying so, strikes me as very disingenuous. . . . It is absolutely incredible. It is indefensible" [The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, 11/13/86].

In the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, Vice President Al Gore issued the following warning to terrorists:

"To those of you who doubt our resolve in America, listen closely. If you plot terror or act on those designs, within our borders or without, against American citizens, we will hunt you down and stop you cold" [Federal News Service, 4/24/96].

When it looked like President Clinton might release 16 violent terrorists from prison, intervention by Terrorism Hawk Al Gore might have scuttled the deal. Yet Gore was not to be heard from until after President Clinton released 11 violent terrorists from prison, when the Vice President had but this to say:

"I'm not going to stand in judgment of his decision" [*Associated Press*, 9/12/99].

When pressed, Gore executed an astounding feat of waffling:

"[Gore] had said in September that he was going to review the record on the prisoners but said today that he meant the White House was reviewing the record and had no intention of doing so himself.

"'There may be a misunderstanding,' the vice president said today. 'What I meant was that at that moment, the White House was in the process of reviewing its decision-making. I have not reviewed the records, and here's why: This is a power given to the president, without any checks or balances. It's not reviewable by anyone.'

"Mr. Clinton asserted executive privilege over the records that led him to release the prisoners. Mr. Gore said he had no position on whether the records should be made public. He suggested in answer to a question that he had no obligation to share his thinking with the public about the clemency, even though he might face such a decision as president. But then he seemed to think twice about that answer.

"'That's an imaginative theory,' Mr. Gore said at first, laughing, and then added: 'Yes, I think that's fair. But I don't think there's any point in me reviewing a voluminous record upon which a decision has been made that is nonreviewable by anybody; there's no checks and no balances, it's his decision'" [*New York Times*, 11/10/99].

Gore's refusal to condemn the President's action is one reason the Fraternal Order of Police declined to endorse Gore's presidential candidacy this weekend. According to John "Rodney" Bartlett of the Maryland Fraternal Order of Police:

"When he was asked on national television about [clemency for the FALN], the Vice President of the United States didn't stand up or even say it was wrong . . . He said he has no opinion. That was very wrong" [*Washington Times*, 9/9/00].

## Terrorism Quiz

1. Do violent terrorists belong in jail?
2. Should a President release terrorists from jail for political gain?
3. Should a President reward terrorism?

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### Resources:

Judiciary Committee web site ([www.senate.gov/~judiciary/wl91599.htm](http://www.senate.gov/~judiciary/wl91599.htm)), with photos and testimony of:

- Rocco Pascarella, Former New York City Policeman/FALN victim
- Bill Newhall, FALN Victim
- Donald Wofford, Former FBI Special Agent Assigned To New York City FALN Investigation
- Richard Hahn, Former FBI Special Agent Assigned To Chicago FALN Investigation
- Gilbert G. Gallegos, National President of the Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police

House Committee on Government Reform web page ([www.house.gov/reform/hearings/faln/99.09.21/index.htm](http://www.house.gov/reform/hearings/faln/99.09.21/index.htm)) and Report 106-488 on FALN clemency ([frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=106\\_cong\\_reports&docid=f:hr488.106.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=106_cong_reports&docid=f:hr488.106.pdf)).

See also RPC papers:

“Victim Requests for Meetings Turned Down: Clinton/Gore Consulted Terrorists’ Supporters But Stiffed Victims,” 9/28/99, ([www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/eb092899.htm](http://www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/eb092899.htm)).

“Coddling Terrorists?” 9/21/99, ([www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/eb3092199.htm](http://www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/eb3092199.htm)).

“Al Gore: Quick to Condemn ‘Arms-for-Hostages,’ but What About ‘Terrorists-for-Votes?’” 9/21/99, ([www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/eb2092199.htm](http://www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/eb2092199.htm)).

“The Clinton Approach to Gun Laws: Harass Lawful Citizens, Prosecute Fewer Criminals, Coddle Terrorists for Political Gain,” 9/21/99, ([www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/gc092199.htm](http://www.senate.gov/~rpc/releases/1999/gc092199.htm)).